

SENATOR RICK LOPES

DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

Legislative Office Building
Room 2400
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
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www.senatedems.ct.gov/Lopes



State of Connecticut
SENATE
Sixth District

Chair
Housing Committee

Vice Chair
Aging Committee

Member
Appropriations Committee
Higher Education & Employment
Advancement Committee
Planning & Development Committee
Transportation Committee

Dear Chairmen Sanchez and McCrory, Ranking Members McCarty and Berthel, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of H.B. 5283.

I am testifying in support of H.B. 5283 because it would finally bring equitable education funding to our district, our students, and our teachers. Currently, New Britain, like many other underfunded districts across Connecticut, is not scheduled to receive its fair share of funding until fiscal year 2028. Six more years is too long to ask our students to wait for the funding they deserve.

New Britain is one of the state's most severely underfunded municipalities. In FY 2023, our school district is projected to be approximately \$19 million short of its fully funded amount, as well as have over \$2.5 million in costs obligated to magnet schools. These are significant challenges for our district to overcome, and a lot to ask of our city's students.

Our students are among the highest of need in Connecticut: 74 percent are low-income; 17 percent are English Learners; and 22 percent are students with disabilities. High-need students like these need additional resources, such as reading interventionists, books and other materials in their first language, and social workers.

Critically, this bill will also support students attending CREC interdistrict magnet schools by providing CREC with need-based funding. These schools will receive additional funding for low-income students and English Learners. Furthermore, because H.B. 5283 will provide our interdistrict magnet schools with the funds their students need and deserve, it will free up spending in districts like New Britain and Hartford, who pay millions of dollars in general education tuition.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted a number of inequities in Connecticut's education funding system. While the federal aid has helped to address the academic and social-emotional needs of our students, this funding expires in FY 2025. If we do not act, we will lose the opportunity for our school districts to make long-term investments. That is why H.B. 5283 calls for fully funding the ECS formula and providing all public school students with need-based funding in FY 2025. Without action, programs and resources our students need now more than ever will be unavailable when the federal funds expire.

H.B. 5283 would bring true equitable funding to all of our public schools, and ensure all Connecticut public school students have the resources they need to be successful. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 5283.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Rick Lopes".

Rick Lopes
State Senator, 6th District
New Britain, Berlin and Farmington